



Serving the Towns of Alford, Great Barrington, Lee,
Lenox, Monterey, Mount Washington,
New Marlborough, Otis, Sheffield and Stockbridge

"The mission of the Southern Berkshire Public Health Collaborative is to leverage partnerships in order to provide quality public health services that directly improve the health and well-being of the entire community."

SBPHC Meeting Minutes

April 8th, 2022 @ 9AM

**Great Barrington Conference Room, 334 Main St., Great Barrington, MA
w/ Remote Option**

Present: Pat Levine, Chair (Sheffield), Rebecca Jurczyk, Vice Chair (Great Barrington), Jim Wilusz (Tri-Town Health Department), Ellie Lovejoy (Mt. Washington), Jayne Smith (Alford and SBPHC), Jill Sweet (PHN)

Remote: Dr. Henry Schwerner (Stockbridge), Juliette Haas (Egremont), Clarence Fanto (Berkshire Eagle), Anina Carr (Sandisfield), Mike Hugo (MAHB), Amy Hardt (PHN)

1. Administrative Items

- a. **Review and Approve March 11, 2022 Minutes:** Ellie Lovejoy moved to accept the minutes; Jim Wilusz seconded the motion. Ellie L asked that we get an approved version of minutes (not just draft) so they can post them on Town websites. Jayne S. asked if the group would like to continue to get detailed minutes or more action-oriented minutes. The group felt there should continue to be a thorough record of the organizational discussion while we are still forming and setting policy. It was suggested that members be provided with a link to the SBPHC page to be put on their website so the agendas and minutes automatically have a link to Town websites. Motion to accept minutes approved unanimously.

2. Topics for Discussion

- a. **Intermunicipal agreement- Next Steps:** Otis, Monterey, Lee, Stockbridge, Mt. Washington, Sheffield have all signed the IMA. Lenox will be submitting theirs in the next few days. Alford, New Marlborough and Great Barrington are still in process of approval. We do not anticipate any issues getting the remaining three towns to sign on. It was agreed that the leadership of the SBPHC collaborative board members in addition to the Cheryl's presentation and the review from KP Law made the process smooth for all. The assistance by MAHB and the State DPH has been very helpful and greatly appreciated.

b. Requests to add Tyringham and Sandisfield:

This item is a follow up from the conversation from last month where Mike H. had shared that MA DPH has the goal that every town in the Commonwealth ultimately be affiliated with a shared services grant. Tyringham has scheduled a conversation with their BOH/SB on April 21st at which time the SBPHC staff will be presenting to Tyringham to explain the process and discuss what membership in the Collaborative would look like for them, including the requirement for active participation if they are part of the community partnership. Committee members expressed that they do not want to dilute the services provided to the original towns. The fact that the MA DPH may be willing to give us additional resources to add Tyringham is what makes this feasible. Adding additional towns in the future would also need resources (from the State or otherwise) in order to not negatively impact the existing member towns. Mike Hugo joined the meeting.

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Anina Carr, from Sandisfield COA, expressed concern about the status of her town's BOH. Sandisfield is very interested in joining the Collaborative and being part of the SBPHC services and hopes that SBPHC will consider letting them join.

There are differences between Sandisfield and Tyringham; Tyringham is not affiliated with the Alliance whereas Sandisfield is captured in the Alliance's shared services grant. Sandisfield is a south county town and part of the South County school districts. Their membership in SBPHC would facilitate providing uniform communication and services so it is important to have this conversation. The group agreed that the ultimate goal is to build a strong foundation with appropriate resources in order to build capacity in the region and not end up simply farming out services piecemeal. What we don't want to do is continue to expand without the necessary staff and resources. Right now, we have a public health nursing program. If we want to expand to provide more services, consistent, long term funding needs to be there.

Mike H. asked for clarification on what our program entails. Jim W. explained that we are public health nursing program (2 FT public health nurses) with a small amount for shared services coordinator and overhead. (Rebecca Jurczyk joined the meeting in person at this point). There currently is no shared inspector. The cost of an expanded shared services is well above the 300K provided if we are going to properly serve our towns with inspection and comprehensive public health nursing services.

Mike H. made a recommendation that SBPHC look at adding Sandisfield and Tyringham and then tie additional funds to getting a shared inspector (food, housing court, etc.) and explained that most of the inspectors that are being hired right now are given a chunk of responsibility to take it off everyone's plate (like inspecting all low-risk foods or all housing). The State wants to get every town involved in a shared services grant and adopting Tyringham to move it off the list of unaffiliated towns would be a good faith effort. The money is there, let's take advantage of it.

If we put in another grant proposal, Jim would like to also have Jayne's position be put into full time since right now it is being subsidized by TTHD and other contracts. If we pull together a proposal, Mike H. suggested we send it to him for review and so he can then advocate on our behalf.

3. Public Health Nursing Updates

- a. **COVID Update:** Amy H. explained that COVID cases are rising but there are not a lot of severe symptoms. A lot of the cases are of people who are both vaccinated and boosted. Jill S., who makes most of the contact tracing calls, is not seeing a lot of kids or many in the 19-40 age group. Instead, the cases coming through MAVEN are mostly 50+ with household-spread infections. Jill is filling in vaccination status information from MIIS since it does not automatically upload. Some towns are seeing travel-related cases. While the confirmed numbers do not capture cases not tested with a PCR test, it is

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good news that Pittsfield's wastewater data (Pittsfield) has not shown a significant spike in virus detection.

There was discussion about communication being hampered by a lot of misinformation and changing information. Getting out accurate and timely information to the public is hard because of the evolving nature of the virus and some incomplete information. Messaging is also difficult, especially when the information from the Commonwealth remains stagnant.

Amy shared that the SBPHC public health nurses sent out a needs survey to families in the school districts and received 400 responses. One-third of the respondents had a loved one who was at high risk for severe COVID disease or had students that were at high risk for severe COVID disease. More than 30 students requested and were given a month's supply of masks appropriate to their size/age. There were also over 5000 K-95 and KN-95 masks distributed to community spots in South County and the public health nurse team is replenishing these as needed.

Testing Resources: Great Barrington has received many at-home tests. SBPHC and Great Barrington have discussed working together ensure the at-home rapid tests are getting distributed to those who need them as quickly as possible.

The issue of home-tests exceeding their marked expiration date was brought up as manufacturers are now saying that tests are good past the expiration date. It was suggested that the SBPHC work on public messaging around expired tests that are still effective. This information could be combined with the current SBPHC guidance on how to use antigen tests.

SBPHC has the capacity to do nurse-administered rapid antigen COVID testing by appointment only (likely in Lee, Great Barrington and Sheffield). The locations would need to be open/outdoors to avoid creating a higher risk space. This program would be based on addressing current testing gaps. For instance, the current BHS program still exists and tests symptomatic and close contacts of people who have insurance. Now that the Stop-the-Spread program no longer exists in Berkshire County, the major identified gaps include:

- Asymptomatic individuals who are not close contacts;
- People that do not have insurance or whose insurance won't cover close contact testing for asymptomatic individuals;
- People who need a nurse-administered test for travel; and
- People who have trouble using at-home tests.

The goal of a by-appointment SBPHC program would be to address those gaps.



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It was confirmed that rapid antigen tests are still not considered a confirmed positive in MAVEN and hence do not add to the official numbers reported by the DPH or MAVEN reports. These tests, however, are presumed to be a positive unless overridden by a PCR test.

b. 2022 Programming/Priorities

At some point, DPH will require all towns to indicate areas where they are meeting public health needs and where they still have needs around the many facets of public health. In the meantime, a draft needs assessment is being created for Collaborative towns based on community/BOH feedback to SBPHC staff. This internal assessment is a snapshot of potential things that the Collaborative can offer members to meet existing needs. It would be helpful for the group to identify what needs are a priority.

It was mentioned that working documents always be marked as DRAFT in order to show that it is not yet an official or finished document.

4. Program and Grant Updates

a. Grant Updates:

- Jim W. mentioned that we should put our heads together for what we want to submit to DPH.
- Rebecca J. announced that Great Barrington Board of Health voted the previous night to contract with the SBPHC to provide all public health nursing services. The IMA will need to get on the Select Board meeting, and it would be good to have the SBPHC staff present. While GB was on both grants, at the time it was not duplicative because it was dividing services. As time went on, it was decided it was easier to have one entity to do all public health nursing services.
- Flu vaccine has been purchased (\$60,000)

b. Drug Take Back Day, April 30, 2022: Jayne S. shared flyer for Drug Take Back Day and asked that final flyer be distributed to towns and networks. It will likely be advertised in the Shoppers' Guide, WSBS (radio) and via social media. Jayne S. is working to find a URL that is easy to communicate. Jayne S. is also working on sharps disposal locations through the South County Opioid Working Group.

c. Shared Folder Update: Going to try out Microsoft Teams. Jim W. has set up a Team, which you would have to upload documents to change them. Jim will resend invitations to join the team to Pat and Rebecca.

d. Community Partner Updates:

- Household Hazardous Waste Day four South County is on May 14th
- July 15th, 2022- Remote meeting option will be up for re-evaluation
- Jayne S. mentioned for towns to let SBPHC know if towns would like to have testing available at Town Meetings
- Jim W. asked if towns would like to go to less frequent meetings through summer (quarterly vs monthly). The group thought that every other month would be better than quarterly at this point. Jim W. also asked towns to think about back up delegates for SBPHC meetings.



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5. **Upcoming Events/Trainings**

a. **April 4, 11, 18, 25th: Chokesaver Courses (GB and Lee)**

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F44A4A72AA0FDC70-chokesaver>

- Trainings will continue until food establishments are meeting requirements.

b. **April 7 @ 3: Online Recreational Camp Inspections Q&A Session**

<https://files.ctctusercontent.com/334efb67401/40be67cf-4012-4969-8d79-60969ba425f0.pdf?rdr=true>

- Jayne S to see if there are notes from this training.

c. **May 10, 2022: ServSafe Certification for Health Inspectors**

<https://files.ctctusercontent.com/334efb67401/aab10900-5d80-492b-a225-1bc5cf2cd073.pdf?rdr=true>

d. **May 12, 2022: Title V Training (WPMHA)**

6. **Next Meeting Date:** May 13th, 2022 @ 9:00am

7. **Adjourn Meeting:** Ellie L. moved to adjourn. Jayne S. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 10:23am.